

Message Text

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16

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 MC-02 GAC-01 ACDA-19 IO-12

TRSE-00 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 OMB-01 RSR-01 /171 W
----- 032669

R 110655 Z MAY 73
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9498
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO CINCPAC
COMIDEASTFOR
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1202

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, CE
SUBJ: OFFER OF SOVIET NAVAL SHIP FOR SRI LANKA NAVY

1. DURING MAY 72 VISIT HERE BY SOVIET ADMIRAL SMIRNOV,
SOVIETS MADE OFFER TO GSL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NAVY SCHOOL
AND ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPMENT OF NAVY PORT AT TRINCOMALEE,
PLUS SMALLER DESTROYER- TYPE SHIP TO REPLACE AGING SRI LANKA
NAVY FRIGATE AND ONLY OCEAN- GOING SHIP GAJABAHU. PM POST-
PONED ACTION ON THISOFFER INDEFINITELY BECAUSE OF PROPOSED
FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN TRINCOMALEE WHICH SHE CONTINUES
TO AVOID. SOVIETS ARE NOW PUSHING GSL TO ACCEPT OFFER OF SMALL
DESTROYER, WITHOUT TRINCO TIE- IN.

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2. NEW SRI LANKA NAVY (SLN) COMMANDER IS FIRST SINHALESE IN THAT POST AND WANTS NEWER, MAJOR SHIP TO DEMONSTRATE HIS PERSONAL ABILITY TO BEGIN TO ACHIEVE LONG UNATTAINABLE SLN GOAL OF " BLUE - WATER" NAVY. SLN, HOWEVER, DOES NOT WANT SOVIET SHIP BECAUSE OF MAINTENANCE AND LOGISTICS PROBLEMS WITH UN-FAMILIAR NON- WESTERN EQUIPMENT. THEY HAVE HAD RECENT BITTER EXPERIENCE IN SEVERE MAINTENANCE DIFFICULTIES WITH PRC SHANGHAI PATROL BOATS.

3. WITH PM' S APPROVAL, SLN HAS BEEN CANVASSING FOR CREDIT PURCHASE OFFER FOR WESTERN NAVAL SHIP THAT WOULD FIT NEEDS. INDIA SAID IT DID NOT HAVE ANY EXCESS, AND FRANCE AND UK ARE INVESTIGATING. DATT HAS ALSO BEEN APPROACHED AND INDICATED ONLY THAT WE WOULD CHECK AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATE SHIP.

4. DURING APRIL 73 VISIT HERE OF PAKISTAN NAVY CINC, PAKS MADE PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL FOR OVERHAUL OF GAJABAHU IN KARACHI. WHILE ONLY ON NAVY- TO- NAVY BASIS AND THUS NOT FIRM GOP OFFER, TERMS DISCUSSED INCLUDED PAYMENT IN SRI LANKA RUPEES FOR USE BY PAK EMBASSY HERE OR POSSIBLY TEA BARTER ARRANGEMENT, EITHER OF WHICH WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO BOTH PARTIES. GSL DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS ARE ACTIVELY DISCUSSING OVERHAUL IDEA AS ALTERNATIVE TO BOTH SOVIET SHIP OFFER AND ALLOCATION OF SCARCE FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR CREDIT PURCHASE OF A WESTERN SHIP.

5. IN VIEW POSSIBILITY THAT PAK OVERHAUL OFFER MAY BE ACCEPTED BY GSL AND THUS GIVE CEYLONese GOOD REASON TO TURN DOWN SOVIET SHIP, EMBASSY BELIEVES USG SHOULD REMAIN NON- COMMITTAL AND CONTINUE FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS. IN MEANTIME, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW IF US HAS AVAILABLE SMALL DESTROYER OR COAST GUARD CUTTER- TYPE SHIP 10 TO 15 YEARS OLD WITH MINIMUM OF SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT AND, IF SO, AT WHAT PRICE AND TERMS IT MIGHT BE OFFERED SHOULD DEVELOPMENTS WARRANT.
VAN HOLLEN

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NMAFVVZCZ

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TAGS: MASS, CE
To: CINCPAC
COMIDEASTFOR
ISLAMABAD
LONDON
MOSCOW
NEA
NEW DELHI

SECSTATE WASHDC

WASHDC

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